

PROCEEDINGS

ON

DR. HAMILTON'S RETIRING

FROM THE

ROYAL INFIRMARY OF EDINBURGH.

HAMILTON, James

1852

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PROCEEDINGS
ON DR. HAMILTON'S RETIRING
FROM THE
ROYAL INFIRMARY OF EDINBURGH.

(CIRCULAR.)

Edinburgh, 6th December, 1823.

I PROPOSE to retire from the Royal Infirmary,
and to forward the Resignation of my Office to the
Managers, in their meeting on Monday the 15th
instant.

J. HAMILTON.

To _____

Manager of the Royal Infirmary.

Edinburgh, 15th December, 1823.

GENTLEMEN,

Eight and forty years ago, I was appointed one of the Physicians of the Royal Infirmary. To the discharge of the important duties of that situation, I brought, under your authority and protection, all the ability I possessed, and all the attention I was capable of exerting: I now beg to retire, and to place my office at your disposal, which I hereby do.

I am, Gentlemen, most respectfully,

Your obedient humble Servant,

JAMES HAMILTON.

The Honourable

The Managers of the Royal Infirmary.

I directed a verbal message to be conveyed to the Managers, purporting that I should continue to act for some time, being unwilling to press a hasty appointment of my successor.

J. H.

10, *London Street*,
Edinburgh, 26th February, 1824.

DEAR SIR,

I am directed by the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, to transmit to you the accompanying Excerpts from their Minutes.

I am, always,

DEAR SIR,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

ALEXANDER BOSWELL.

Doctor James Hamilton, Senior,
St. Andrew's Square.

EXCERPT from “REPORT of Managers of Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, to the Annual Court of Contributors,” held on 5th January, 1824, and COPY of RESOLUTION of the Court, with reference to said Excerpt.

————— “While the Managers thus offer their
 “ thanks to their Medical and Surgical officers,

“ they regret to announce to the General Court,
 “ that DOCTOR JAMES HAMILTON, the Senior
 “ Physician of the Institution, after a service of
 “ Forty-eight years, performed with unremitting
 “ zeal, and great professional abilities, has intimat-
 “ ed his intention to retire from office. The Ma-
 “ nagers, therefore, beg to return to him their most
 “ grateful thanks ; sensible as they are, that by the
 “ able and active discharge of the very important
 “ duties attached to the office of Physician to such
 “ an Institution, Doctor Hamilton has not only
 “ been the means of saving many valuable lives to
 “ the community, but increasing the reputation of
 “ the hospital, as forming part of the Medical
 “ School of this city.”

SIR WILLIAM ARBUTHNOT, with reference to
 that part of the Report which mentioned the resig-
 nation of Dr. Hamilton, after a high eulogium on
 his distinguished talents and services to the Infir-
 mary, moved, “ That Doctor Hamilton, having
 “ resigned the office of Physician to the Royal
 “ Infirmary, which he has filled for forty-eight
 “ years ; and the Managers having expressed the
 “ highest satisfaction with the manner in which he
 “ has at all times discharged the important duties

“ of the office, this Meeting resolve to return him
 “ their warmest thanks for his long and meritori-
 “ ous services, as a public and lasting Memorial of
 “ the gratitude of the Contributors, for the able
 “ and zealous exertions of so distinguished a ser-
 “ vant of the Royal Infirmary.”

MR. RUSSELL, in seconding the motion, stated, that during a period of many years, while acting in the Infirmary, he had the best opportunity of witnessing the high talents and the unremitted zeal of Dr. Hamilton for the interest of the Institution, and that he felt it nearly impossible to convey to the Court of Contributors, an adequate idea of his services. He concluded by reading to the Court a letter, which he and the other surgeons who had acted in the house, had transmitted to Dr. Hamilton on learning of his resignation, which was in the following terms :

“ *Edinburgh, 20th December, 1823.*

“ DEAR SIR,

“ We, the present and former Surgeons of the
 “ Royal Infirmary, cannot contemplate your re-
 “ signation without experiencing feelings of the
 “ most sincere regret, in consequence of the very

“ high opinion which we entertain of your merit
 “ as an Hospital Physician, whom we have long
 “ been accustomed to regard as one of the chief
 “ supports and ornaments of the establishment.
 “ The conscientious fidelity, punctuality, and at-
 “ tention which you displayed in the discharge of
 “ your duty, obtained our most unqualified appro-
 “ bation ; while your private virtue as a Gentle-
 “ man, your kindness, candour, and liberality, se-
 “ cured you our affection and esteem, when we
 “ acted as your coadjutors in the Hospital. We
 “ have often admired your sagacity as a practi-
 “ tioner, the result of long and attentive experi-
 “ ence, which enabled you to treat with advantage
 “ diseases which would have baffled the skill of
 “ those who were less perfectly acquainted with the
 “ nature of the cases which they were treating.
 “ The same long and attentive experience has
 “ given birth to certainly one of the best and most
 “ useful works on the practice of medicine, which
 “ has been published in our time, and which, in
 “ our opinion, has equally contributed to exalt the
 “ character of the author and to extend and sup-
 “ port the reputation of Edinburgh, as a celebrat-
 “ ed school of Medicine. To you, therefore, the
 “ Public in general, and the Royal Infirmary in

“ particular, owe their most grateful acknowledge-
 “ ments ; and although we cannot wonder that one
 “ at your advanced period of life, should desire to
 “ be relieved from the onerous responsibility of so
 “ great a charge, we wish most earnestly that the
 “ Royal Infirmary could still continue to enjoy the
 “ benefit of your countenance, and of your occa-
 “ sional assistance.

“ Wishing you all health and happiness in your
 “ retirement, or, in the language of Cicero, that
 “ you may long enjoy ‘ *otium cum dignitate* ;’ we
 “ remain, with much respect and regard, ever very
 “ truly yours, &c.

(Signed)

JAMES RUSSELL,
 JA. LAW,
 ANDREW INGLIS,
 JOHN THOMSON, M. D.
 GEORGE BELL,
 WILL^M. NEWBIGGING,
 A. GILLESPIE,
 WILLIAM WOOD,
 J. H. WISHART,
 JOSEPH BELL,
 ROBERT ALLAN,
 GEO. BALLINGALL.

‘ *To Dr. James Hamilton, Senior.*’

“ The Motion was put and carried unanimously.”

Extracted by

ALEX^R. BOSWELL, W. S.

Clerk to the Incorporation.

EXCERPT from Minutes of a Meeting of the
Managers of THE ROYAL INFIRMARY of EDIN-
BURGH, held upon the 16th day of February,
1824.

Present,

RIGHT HON. LORD PRESIDENT,

RIGHT HON. LORD ADVOCATE,

HON. BARON CLERK RATTRAY,

SIR WILLIAM FORBES, BARONET,

GILBERT INNES, ESQ.

HENRY JARDINE, ESQ.

DOCTOR HOPE,

DOCTOR WOOD,

DOCTOR MONRO,

JOHN WAUCHOPE, ESQ.

REV. DR. DAVIDSON,

DOCTOR DUNCAN, JUNIOR.

HON. BARON CLERK RATTRAY, *Preses.*

The Managers, having met to elect a Physician to the Institution in the room of Doctor James Hamilton, before proceeding to the Election, and independent of the Vote of Thanks passed in favour of Dr. Hamilton, in their Report to the General Court of Contributors on the 5th ultimo, and the Vote also passed by the said General Court, being anxious still to retain the benefit of Dr. Hamilton's assistance in cases of emergency and difficulty, unanimously request of him to accept of the situation of Honorary Consulting Physician to the Institution.

The Managers further directed their particular request to be communicated to Dr. Hamilton, that he would permit his Portrait to be taken by Mr. John Watson, to be preserved in the Infirmary as a Testimony of the high sense they entertain of the Doctor's unremitting attention, and eminent and distinguished services for so unprecedented a period of years.

The Clerk of the Institution was directed to transmit to Dr. Hamilton an Excerpt from the Report of the Managers to the General Court of Contributors—of the Resolution of that Court—and of

this Minute, so far as respected him, and the request which the Managers have now made.”

Extracted by

ALEX^R. BOSWELL, W. S.

Clerk to the Incorporation.

Edinburgh, 28th February, 1824.

GENTLEMEN,

I have received “ Excerpt from Managers’ Report to Annual Court of Contributors to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh ; and Copy Resolution of the Court, with reference thereto, 5th January, 1824,”—And “ Excerpt from Minute Managers of the Royal Infirmary, 16th February 1824,”—which Mr. Boswell has transmitted to me by your direction.

Your approbation of my conduct while acting as Physician to the Infirmary, so kindly expressed in these documents, calls for my heartfelt acknowledgements, which I beg to tender to you.

I accept with gratitude the distinguished situation of Honorary Consulting Physician to the In-

firmary, to which you are disposed to call me, and by which I shall retain some connexion with an Institution, to which a long experience of your disinterested management of its affairs, and of your kindness towards me, expressed on many occasions, has greatly attached me.

I cannot decline your polite request respecting my Portrait, but permit me to say, that in not doing so I make some sacrifice of personal feeling.

I am, most respectfully,

GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient and humble Servant,

JAMES HAMILTON.

*The Honourable
The Managers of the Royal Infirmary,
Edinburgh.*

At a numerous meeting of the Medical Students of Edinburgh, it was unanimously agreed to present the following Address to DR. HAMILTON, Senior, on his retiring from the Royal Infirmary :—

PHYSICIANS' HALL,
Edinburgh, 27th March, 1824.

SIR,

On the occasion of your resigning the situation of Physician to the Royal Infirmary, we, the Medical Students of Edinburgh, beg leave most respectfully to assure you, that it is with sentiments of the most unfeigned regret that we see you retire from that important situation, in which, for the

unprecedented period of nearly half a century, you have officiated with equal honour and reputation to yourself, advantage to the public, and benefit to the Medical School.

As you now claim the privilege of age, that honourable immunity from the fatigues and anxiety of a laborious profession, to which, by a life of such unwearied activity and usefulness, you are so justly entitled ; and as we shall no longer have it in our power to listen to the wisdom of your precepts, or enjoy the advantage of your instruction, permit us to offer this inadequate, but sincere expression of our gratitude, both for the benefits which we have individually received, and for those which, by your valuable exertions in the cause of science, and for the promotion of true medical knowledge, you have conferred upon the profession at large.

The soundness of judgment, and the independence of thought, which you have displayed in promulgating doctrines, opposed at first to the prevailing opinions of the day, but deduced from long experience and accurate observation, and the general adoption of which has since formed an era in the annals of medical science ; the uncommon, we may say the unerring acuteness in discriminating, and

the masterly conciseness in delineating the phenomena of disease, for which you have ever been distinguished ; and the vigour of intellect and energy of character, which we rejoice to see, that the labours of half a century have left unimpaired, call alike for our respect, our admiration, and our gratitude.

To expatiate upon your public and private merits would be indelicate, as it is unnecessary, but we may be allowed to observe, that to those among us, who have had the happiness of being more immediately within the sphere of your acquaintance, the uniform kindness and urbanity of your manner has greatly enhanced the advantages which they have derived from your instructions, and of which they can never cease to entertain the most grateful recollection.

That you may be long preserved to a circle of admiring friends, to whom you are endeared not less as the polished gentleman and scholar, than as the accomplished and enlightened physician ; and that you may be long permitted to enjoy, in your dignified retirement, the unalloyed satisfaction which flows from the assurance, that your labours have not been in vain, is our most sincere and fervent hope.

To which DR. HAMILTON returned the following reply :

GENTLEMEN,

I receive with deference the communication which the gentlemen deputed by you have handed to me on occasion of my resigning the office of Physician to the Royal Infirmary.

You kindly express your regret on my retiring, as leading to an interruption of that connection which has subsisted for nearly half a century between the medical students and myself. Be assured my feelings accord entirely with yours. To withdraw myself from the immediate notice of gentlemen whose countenance has been so long my pride ;—of gentlemen at once the ornament and support of the Edinburgh Medical School, was to me a painful effort—An effort, however, which prudence dictated, for although still possessing the ability and activity necessary for discharging the duties of the office which I have resigned, yet a few

revolving years, if I survive, must bring on the failures incident to humanity, and force that dereliction of office which I anticipate only by a short period.

Your sentiments with regard to myself, couched in all the delicacy of language, it would be fastidious not to say, are highly agreeable to me; but on this subject it behoves me to preserve a grateful silence. I may be permitted, however, to remark, that these sentiments may originate more from your partiality towards me, than from any peculiar merit of my own.

I thank you for the kind hope you express, that I may pass in comfort the future stage of my life. —Be assured that my fervent wishes for your health, happiness, and prosperity, shall always attend you.

JAMES HAMILTON.

*To the Gentlemen addressing
Dr Hamilton on his retiring from
the Royal Infirmary.*

